MARVEL® GRAPHIC NOVEL

WOLFPACK™

THE PACK IS BACK!

By Larry Hama & Ron Wilson

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CHAPTER 1 . . .

"RAFAEL"

THE SECOND FLOOR CORRIDOR OF HORACE HARDING HIGH SCHOOL IN THE SOUTH BRONX...

YO, RAFAEL!

WORD IS OUT, YOU BEEN TELLING OUR *CLIENTS* NOT TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE *DTK* PROTECTION PLAN!

THAT'S RIGHT, LAMARR. ***YOU'RE*** THE ONE THE KIDS NEED PROTECTION FROM! YOU AND YOUR GOON SQUAD THE *DTKS*!

HEAR THAT, JELLY? THE LITTLE 'RICAN PUNK CALLED YOU AND ZULU GOONS!

THAT AIN'T RIGHT...

CLARENCE... YOU'RE A HALL MONITOR! DO SOMETHING!

UHHH, MAYBE DEAN SIMPSON SHOULD HANDLE THIS...

BOYS

EXIT

DANCE SAT

HOME BOYS

FIRE

VOTE FOR STUDENT PRESS

TOM WUZ

RAP FROG

STEP INTO MY "OFFICE"! LET'S SEE SOME O' THEM FANCY KARATE MOVES YOU BEEN LEARNIN' AT THE SETTLEMENT HOUSE!

FUNDS WERE CUT. THE DOJO'S BEEN CLOSED FOR MONTHS--

THAT'S TOO BAD. JUST MEANS IT'S GONNA TAKE LESS TIME FOR US TO KICK YOUR FACE IN!

CHILL OUT, LAMARR! I DON'T WANNA THROW DOWN ON YOU!

THAT A THREAT? OH, I'M SHAKIN' IN MY BOOTS! YOU SCARE ME, RAFAEL! WHY, I COULD SPRAIN MY TOE, STOMPIN' YOUR SKINNY BUTT DOWN THE STAIRS!

WHOMP!

THUD!

OK! YOU WANNA SWING? YOU GOT IT!

WHAP!

"CONSCIENCE IS BUT A WORD THAT COWARDS USE, DEVISED AT FIRST TO KEEP THE STRONG IN AWE: OUR STRONG ARMS BE OUR CONSCIENCE, SWORDS OUR LAW!"

"MARCH ON, JOIN BRAVELY, LET US TO'T PELL-MELL, IF NOT TO HEAVEN THEN HAND IN HAND TO--"

SNAP! CLANK!

THIS GUY THINKS HE'S BRUCE LEE!

WE'LL MAKE HIM *BRUISED* LEE!

C'MON AND --

YO, MAN, DON'T BE CROWDING MY ACTION WHEN I'M THROWIN' DOWN!

YOU KNOCKED MY BOOKS DOWN, CHUMP!

GO

BOOK FAIR

MARY STUDENT PRESS

SORRY 'BOUT THAT. I'LL HELP YOU PICK 'EM UP AFTER I FINISH WITH THESE --

THAT'S NOT GOOD ENOUGH...

...YOU'RE PICKIN' THEM BOOKS UP, NOW!

BACK OFF!

MAKE ME!

BUT FRANKLY...

...I DON'T THINK YOU CAN!

SLAM!

HEY!

LIGHTEN UP, BROTHER! THIS IS *OUR* FIGHT--

I AM NOT YOUR BROTHER AND THIS IS NOT YOUR FIGHT UNTIL *I'M* FINISHED!

I HEARD OF THIS GUY, LAMARR...NAME'S SLAG. SOME EGG-HEAD SISSY JUNIOR! HE GOTS TO BE SHOWN HIS PLACE--

GO BOOK FAIR

IN CASE OF FIRE

FIRE EXTINGUISHER

SCIENCE FAIR MONLA

I WANNA SEE HOW MUCH HEART THE EGGHEAD HAS. DO YOUR STUFF, SLAG.

PUT SOME DEEP HURT ON HIM!

I'M NOT DOING THIS FOR YOU, LAMARR!

I'D PULL THESE PUNCHES IF I COULD BUT THIS HAS TO LOOK REAL...

WHOMP!

YOU WERE IN A *KILLING* STANCE! THAT WAS OVERREACTION! YOU WERE TAUGHT BETTER THAN THAT! THESE PUNKS ARE NO THREAT TO YOU!

VOTE

HENRY MEDENA STUDENT PRESS

H-HOW DID YOU KNOW? WHO ARE Y-YOU?

I'M THE BEST FRIEND YOU'VE GOT RIGHT NOW! I'M GOING TO ROLL YOU DOWN THE STAIRS AND YOU'RE GOING TO RUN FOR IT--

FREEZE!
I CERTAINLY HOPE I HAVEN'T STUMBLED ON ANTISOCIAL ACTIVITY IN MY STAIRWELL!
I WILL NOT ABIDE LAWLESSNESS IN MY DOMAIN!
LAMARR AIN'T AFRAID OF DEAN SIMPSON!
YO MA MA
BOOK FAIR
WILL HERE
BUT SHE AIN'T AFRAID OF LAMARR, EITHER!
... AND IN A STRAIGHT FIGHT, I'D PUT MY MONEY ON DEAN SIMPSON!
WELL? I DON'T HEAR ANY EXPLANATIONS!

RAFAEL TRIPPED AND FELL DOWN THE STAIRS, DEAN SIMPSON...
YES, M'AM... AND SLAG HERE, WAS JUST HELPING ME UP...
WE WAS SORT OF HELPING OUT, TOO, M'AM... BY THE WAY, THAT'S A LOVELY DRESS YOU HAVE ON TODAY--
SAVE IT, LAMARR. I WASN'T BORN YESTERDAY.
YOU CAN SAY THAT AGAIN!
I'LL REMEMBER THAT, JELLY.

YOU DIDN'T GET MARKED UP LIKE THAT FALLING DOWN THE STAIRS UNLESS YOU WERE OUT TO CHIP THE BANISTER WITH YOUR FACE--
THOSE AREN'T BRUISES, DEAN SIMPSON...

...THAT'S A SKIN CONDITION. HE LEFT HIS MEDICATION AT MY FATHER'S HARDWARE STORE, WHERE HE WORKS AFTER SCHOOL!
HEINZE
SAMUEL WELTSCHMERZ! WHAT'S AN INTELLIGENT, WELL-BEHAVED BOY LIKE YOU DOING STICKING UP FOR--

JUST SEEING THAT JUSTICE IS SERVED, M'AM. AND BY THE WAY, RAFAEL DIDN'T TRIP. THOSE BAD BOYS OVER THERE, *PUSHED* HIM!
FOR HERNY MEDINA FOR
MY FATHER GAVE ME RAFAEL'S OINTMENT TO BRING TO HIM...

WAIT FOR ME IN MY OFFICE LAMARR! I HOPE WE CAN SETTLE THIS MATTER WITHOUT BRINGING INSPECTOR CASSIDY IN!

YOU DIDN'T HAVE TO DO THAT, SLIPPERY SAM. I CAN TAKE MY OWN FALLS...

...AND RATTING ON LAMARR IS JUST ASKING FOR TROUBLE!

I CAN HANDLE LAMARR. WHAT WAS YOUR BEEF WITH THAT SLAG FELLA, ANYWAY?

EXI

NO DISPUTE. JUST A MISUNDERSTANDING...

HE SAID HE WAS PREVENTING ME FROM KILLING THE *DTKS*...

WERE YOU?

WHAT?

GOING TO KILL THEM?

HOW?

OH, I DON'T KNOW...

MAYBE YOU'RE NOT JUST ANOTHER SIXTEEN YEAR OLD PUERTO RICAN KID...

MAYBE, YOU'RE A MEMBER OF A SECRET ANCIENT MARTIAL ARTS CULT...

MAYBE YOU'RE A NINJA ASSASSIN WITH THE BEST COVER IN THE WORLD...

AFTER ALL, APPEARANCES CAN BE DECEIVING!

YOU'RE WEIRD, SAM. THAT'S WHY YOU GOT NO FRIENDS!

THAT A FACT? I THOUGHT IT WAS BECAUSE ALL THE OTHER JEWS MOVED OUT OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD!

PHONE

NO DYKE

ID

STOP GO

YOU HUNGRY?

NO...

DO NO LITER

...BUT I'LL TAG ALONG WHILE YOU GROVEL AND DEBASE YOURSELF IN FRONT OF SOME F.O.B. IN A BURGER CLOWN SUIT!

SHE'S NOT FRESH-OFF-THE-BOAT! SHE WAS BORN HERE--

BURGER CLOWN

I KNOW, RAFAEL. I'M RIDING YOUR CASE. SOMETIMES, I GO TOO FAR. WE COOL?

YO.

I FOUND OUT HER NAME, SLIPPERY. IT'S SHARON! BEAUTIFUL, NO? HER MOTHER IS VIETNAMESE AND HER FATHER WAS A MARINE AND--

PASTRY

William + Alma

Kiss Me

POWER

LOVE

OI-GEVALT, YOU GOT IT SO BAD YOU DON'T KNOW IT YET!

LET'S SEE... WHAT DO I WANT...

...WHAT I *REALLY* WANT IS KIELBASIE AND RED CABBAGE--

WE DON'T HAVE THAT STUFF, WHEELS...

THEN I'LL SETTLE FOR A BURGER AND FRIES!

CUT THE BANTER, CRIPPO...

...US *WHOLE* PEOPLE GOT THINGS TO DO!

SURE, PAL...

...I'LL GET A MOVE ON.

SORRY I WASTED YOUR TIME!

CRUNCH!

ARRRRRRGH!

DO NO LITER

ON SECOND THOUGHT...

...I'M NOT SORRY AT ALL!

COME BACK HERE, YOU LITTLE SLIME-BALL!

HE CAN'T GET FAR, HE'S A CRIP!

BUT WHEELS IS FASTER THAN HEELS! GET IT?

YOU'RE GONNA GET IT!

UH, I'LL HAVE A BURGER, HOLD THE LETTUCE.

DRINK?

WHAT KIND?

SURE.

MAN, THE SUAVITY OF YOUR RAP IS KILLER! IT'S OUT THERE!

I'M GONNA GET IT? HEAR THAT, NINE-TAILS? THESE BOZOS ARE GONNA GIVE IT TO ME!

MEOWWW!

WHOMP!

KETCHUP?

YOU GOT THOSE LITTLE PACKETS?

BUT I THINK WE'RE GONNA GIVE IT TO THEM...

THWACK!

...RIGHT, NINE-TAILS?

SSSSSSS!

SKKRRTCH!

LOOKS LIKE THAT KID IN THE WHEELCHAIR CAN REALLY TAKE CARE OF HIMSELF...

CRUSH

WHEELS WOLINSKI? HE AIN'T SO TOUGH. GOT A MEAN CAT, THOUGH...

SO TELL ME-- WHEN ARE YOU GONNA GET UP ENOUGH NERVE TO ASK THIS SHARON OUT? I MEAN...

...YOU DON'T REALLY LIKE THESE CRUMMY BURGERS, DO YOU?

FISH

MACK'S

MARKET

SHE'D TURN ME DOWN, SAM. SHE'S AN HONOR STUDENT AND SHE'S ON THE TRACK TEAM. AND WITH THIS AFTER-SCHOOL JOB AT THE BURGER CLOWN--

--SHE'S GOT NO TIME FOR A SOCIAL LIFE. BESIDES, HER FATHER'S REAL STRICT!

HOW'D YOU KNOW?

FIGURES.

SO WHAT'S THE USE? WHY TORTURE YOURSELF EVERY DAY BY GOING IN THERE AND TALKING TO HER THROUGH THAT ARMORED GLASS?

IT JUST MAKES ME FEEL GOOD TO SEE HER, SAM...

...IF THAT'S ALL I CAN HAVE--

HEY!

WHAT'S GOING ON AT MY DAD'S STORE?!!

SAM'S HARDWARE
HOME SUPPLIES
SANTO'S MARKET
116 ST.
ST
16¢
10¢
BEEF RIBS
99¢
STEAK
40¢ A POUND
EMERGENCY
AMBULANCE
PAPA!
Fat

WE WAS ROBBED, SAM! THREE OF 'EM! IN THOSE SKI-MASK THINGS LIKE TERRORISTS WEAR!

MASKS? NOBODY WEARS A MASK TO ROB A STORE IN THE SOUTH BRONX!

MAYBE THEY WERE CRAZY JUNKIES! I'M GONNA FIND 'EM-- IF I HAVE TO ROUST EVERY SHOOTING GALLERY IN TOWN, I'LL--

A JUNKIE DON'T THINK THAT FAR AHEAD TO HIDE HIS FACE. IT MUST HAVE BEEN SOMEBODY RECOGNIZABLE...

IT WASN'T JUST A ROBBERY, THEY SMASHED UP THE STORE AND GAVE THE OLD MAN A SERIOUS WORKING OVER. POSSIBLE FRACTURED SKULL AND INTERNAL INJURIES...THE ROBBERY WAS ALMOST SECONDARY.

INSPECTOR CASSIDY!

PAPA...THOSE THREE GUYS... DID ONE OF THEM HAVE A FUNNY EYE AND THE OTHER TWO--ONE FAT AND THE OTHER TALL AND SKINNY?

YEAH! LIKE YOU SAID!

SLIPPERY SAM WELTSCHMERZ! YOU SEEM TO KNOW MORE ABOUT THE PERPS* IN THIS CASE THAN THE WITNESSES!

YOU MIND FILLING IN YOUR FRIENDLY NEIGHBORHOOD LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICER SO HE'S NOT STUMBLING AROUND IN THE DARK AS IS HIS USUAL WONT?

*PERPETRATORS

ALL I KNOW IS WHAT I HEAR ON THE STREET, CASSIDY...

CLAMMIN' UP ON ME, KID?

I WASN'T HERE, I DIDN'T SEE NOTHIN' AND I DON'T KNOW NOTHIN'...

I HOPE YOU'RE NOT THINKING ABOUT GOING AFTER THESE GUYS YOURSELF...

AMBUL

WHY NOT?

I'LL HAVE TO STOP YOU.

AMBUL

PL03

YOU CAN TRY, CASSIDY.

AMBULANCE

AMBULANCE

FAT BOYS

MC. HOME BOYS

MR T.

KING

CLOSE

LATER...

WHAT ARE YOU DOING HOME SO EARLY? WHY AREN'T YOU WORKING AT THE HARDWARE STORE?

DID YOU GET FIRED?!

NO, MA... THE STORE GOT ROBBED AND MR. WELTSCHMERZ GOT BEAT UP REAL BAD...

...SAM WENT WITH HIM TO THE HOSPITAL AND THE COPS LOCKED UP THE STORE.

CARAMBA!

THAT POOR MR. WELTSCHMERZ! WILL HE BE--

IT'S TOO EARLY TO TELL...

THAT WAS THE WAY YOUR FATHER DIED, RAFAEL. THEY CAME TO ROB HIS BODEGA.* THERE WAS ONLY $14.95 IN THE CASH REGISTER, SO THEY SHOT HIM AND--

MA--

*GROCERY STORE

WHAT HAPPENED TO YOUR FACE?

YOU'VE BEEN FIGHTING AGAIN? YOU WEAR THESE CRAZY CLOTHES AND HANG OUT WITH HOODLUMS! YOU GET INTO FIGHTS WITH THOSE ANIMALS ON THE STREET, THEY'RE GOING TO KILL YOU, RAFAEL!

WHAT AM I GOING TO DO IF ANYTHING HAPPENS TO YOU?

I DON'T KNOW, MA.

ONE WAY
KEEP OUT

RAFEL and NIPO

DAN KAI n TIPY

BOOM ♥ MARK AND TERY

THAT NIGHT...

AIR JORDON

"IT'S TIME,"

"HECTOR AND LUIS ARE ASLEEP. GOOD."

"TIME TO FALL INTO THE NIGHT..."

"TIME TO BREATHE THE DARKNESS..."

"TIME TO BE A HUNTING BEAST..."

"...A *WOLF!*"

"I HUNT WITH CAUTION. I USE A DIFFERENT PATH EVERY TIME..."

"...AND NEVER THE PATH ITSELF, NO. THAT IS TOO OBVIOUS."

"AND TRACKS. NEW SNOW ON THE ALLEY. ONE GLANCE OUT THE WINDOW AND HE'LL KNOW I'M HERE..."

"WALKING ON THE CANS WOULD BE NOISY--"

"--IF I WAS AN ORDINARY RUN-OF-THE MILL INTRUDER!"

"BUT I HAVE THE SKILL TO BE SOUNDLESS AND FLEET!"

"AND I HAVE KNOWLEDGE...

"STRENGTH...

"CUNNING...

"...AND YOUTH.

"THE FALLING LEAF MAKES NO SOUND."

"WHEN THE DEFENDER SENSES THE INTRUDER, HE WILL MOVE TO AN ADVANTAGEOUS POSITION. BE STILL AND LISTEN..!"

"LET HIS MOVEMENT BETRAY HIM."

"PLACID SILENCE MEANS THE DEFENDER IS ASLEEP..."

SUPERINTENDENT

"...A TENSE SILENCE INDICATES A WARY DEFENDER SKILLED IN THE ARTS OF STEALTH!"

I KNOW YOU'RE OUT THERE!

CLICK

LET'S SEE HOW GOOD YOU ARE IN THE DARK!

I'M GOING TO FIND YOU...

AND I'VE GOT ME A BIG STICK...

SU

"THE SOUNDLESSNESS CRACKLES WITH AN ALERT PRESENCE..."

"...SOMEONE IS BREATHING QUIETLY IN THE ELECTRIC METER ALCOVE!"

AND THERE AIN'T NOTHIN' IN THE WORLD GONNA KEEP ME FROM BEATIN' YOUR HEAD WITH IT!

"THE DEFENDER WILL RAISE THE ALARM AND BEAT HIS SHIELD."

"HE HOPES THE INTRUDER WILL PANIC AND SHOW HIS POSITION."

"THE WOLF IS PATIENT, HE WAITS FOR THE DEFENDER TO PLACE HIMSELF IN A WEAK POSITION--"

"--AND *HE STRIKES!*"

HUH? HE'S GONE--

UH-OH!

THAT ALL YOU GOT TO SAY?

UH-OH IS RIGHT!

BONK!

YOW! THAT REALLY HURT!!

OF COURSE IT DID...

...I MEANT IT TO!

THAT'S NOT FAIR, MR. MACK! YOU WERE THE ONE THAT TOLD ME TO TRY TO SNEAK UP ON YOU!

YOU WERE SLOPPY. I HEARD THE SHARP INTAKE OF BREATH WHEN YOU JUMPED ON THE CANS. AND I DON'T LIKE YOU USING MY TECHNIQUES ON YOUR SCHOOLMATES, NO MATTER HOW MURDEROUS THEY ARE!

OWWWWWW

HOW DID YOU KNOW ABOUT THAT?

MR. MACK KNOWS ALL AND SEES ALL.

C'MON INSIDE. WE'LL PUT SOME ICE ON THAT LUMP AND I'LL TELL YOU A STORY...

BACK BEFORE THE SECOND WORLD WAR, I WAS A NAVY COOK ON A GUNBOAT ON THE YELLOW RIVER IN CHINA...

THE SERVICES WERE ALL JIM CROW BACK THEN YOU KNOW... SEGREGATED. BLACK FOLKS WEREN'T GOOD ENOUGH TO DO THE REAL FIGHTIN'. WE WERE COOKS, STEWARDS AND BOILER STOKERS...

I HAD GONE ASHORE TO BUY FRESH MEAT, I HAD BOUGHT THREE CHICKENS AND I WAS COUNTING MY CHANGE...

YOU GAVE ME TOO MUCH CHANGE, M'AM! I'M ONLY SUPPOSED TO GET BACK ONE OF THESE COPPER COINS...

AHHH! IT SEEMS THERE *ARE* AMERICANS WITH HONOR DESPITE WHAT THE WARLORDS SAY...

HONOR? HE'S JUST A IGNORANT NIGRA! THIS BOY IS JUS' TOO PLAIN STUPID FOR HIS OWN GOOD!

HE'S ALSO TOO SLOW IN GETTIN' OUT OF THE WAY OF HIS BETTERS!

AIN'T THAT RIGHT, BOY?

"THEY WERE FROM THE MARINE DETACHMENT QUARTERED ON THE GUNBOAT. THEIR LEADER WAS A GUNNY NAMED SMALLS..!!"

WE CAN'T BE HAVIN' OUR COLOREDS RUNNIN' SOFT ON THE CHINKOS! YOU GOTS TO HELP US KEEP 'EM IN THEIR PLACE...

...JUST LIKE WE KEEP YOU IN YOURS!

I GOT NO QUARREL WITH YOU, SMALLS...

THAT'S GUNNERY SERGEANT SMALLS TO YOU, BOY!

RECKON WE GOTTA POUND SOME RESPECT INTO THIS BUCK?

I RECKON.

DON'T MAKE ME THROW DOWN ON YOU, SMALLS! I'M NOT--

NO. EVEN YOU WIN, YOU LOSE. THEY LIE AND BE BELIEVED BECAUSE YOU BLACK AND THEY WHITE...

WHU--

...THE WISE WARRIOR WAITS UNTIL HE HAS ADVANTAGE!

STAND ASIDE, YA OLD BAT!

YOU AIN'T GONNA STOP US!

I'M NOT?

MAN, THAT LITTLE OL' GRANNY LADY PICKED ME UP AND TOSSED ME IN HERE LIKE I WAS A HALF-POUND SACK O' BEANS!

SHE MUST BE LIFTING WEIGHTS OR SOMETHIN'!

STILL, THOSE THREE WILL MOW HER DOWN! I'D BETTER GET OUT THERE AND--

--HUH!?

LOOKS LIKE A TYPHOON HIT THESE TWO! AND SMALLS...

HIM I NO BOTHER WITH. HE GOT NO JUICE. NOT LIVE MAYBE TWO OR THREE DAY MORE. INSIDE SICK. NO JUICE.

HERE. YOU TAKE CHICKENS. YOU GOOD FELLA, GOT PLENTY JUICE.

THANKS, M'AM, WAS THAT SOME SORT OF JIU-JITSU OR SOMESUCH YOU JUST USED?

NO JIU-JITSU! NO GUNG-FU! OLD FORM! BEFORE SHAO-LIN TEMPLE, BEFORE BODHI-DHARMA, BEFORE SUN-TZU!

YOU GOT GOOD HEART. YOUR BOAT COME HERE EVERY WEEK. YOU COME, I TEACH. YOU LEARN OLD FORM!

"I THOUGHT SHE WAS NICE, BUT CRAZY. BUT TWO DAYS LATER..."

...AND SO WE COMMIT THE BODY OF GUNNERY SERGEANT SMALLS TO THE DEEP IN HOPES THAT--

"CONGESTIVE HEART FAILURE. NO JUICE."

THAT WAS CLOSE TO FIFTY YEARS AGO. SHE TAUGHT ME THINGS THAT ARE EVEN NOW UNEXPLAINABLE BY MODERN SCIENCE.

AND THAT WAS ONLY THE *BEGINNING...*

WE PATROLLED THAT RIVER FOR TWO YEARS AND EVERY TIME WE STOPPED IN THAT VILLAGE, SHE HAD A NEW LESSON FOR ME. A NEW SECRET...

WHY DID THE OLD LADY WANT TO TEACH YOU EVERYTHING?

FOR THE VERY SAME REASONS I HAVE SPENT THE LAST YEAR TEACHING YOU...

...SO THAT THE SECRETS OF THE *PACK* MAY BE HANDED DOWN TO THE NEXT GENERATION WHO MUST BATTLE *THE NINE!*

ARE YOU GONNA START IN ON THAT MUMBO-JUMBO AGAIN?

PARANOIA IS SIMPLY KNOWING THE TRUTH...

AND I ASSURE YOU--

WHOOSH!

--*THE NINE* ARE QUITE REAL!

THOK!

THEY ARE JUST AS REAL AS THE WOLFPACK THAT EXISTS TO KEEP THEM IN CHECK! I BELIEVE YOU ALREADY KNOW THE MEMBERS OF THIS PARTICULAR PACK...

...THEY'VE ALL BEEN STUDYING WITH ME FOR QUITE SOME TIME!

WHEELS WOLINSKI...

SLAG...

AND SHARON...

SLIPPERY SAM WELTSCHMERZ IS ALSO A MEMBER. HE WAS SUPPOSED TO BE HERE TONIGHT FOR THIS, BUT--

SHARON! YOU'RE A STUDENT OF MACK'S?

HOW--?

HOW? I'LL TELL YOU! OVER TWO THOUSAND YEARS AGO, A LOST TRIBE OF ISRAEL WANDERED INTO CHINA...

"...THEY TOLD OF A PECULIAR COVENANT THAT THE GOD OF THE HEBREWS HAD MADE, PROMISING THE PERPETUAL EXISTENCE OF TEN JUST AND TRULY RIGHTEOUS MEN IN THE WORLD AT ALL TIMES.

"BUT THE UNIVERSE DEMANDS ITS OWN BALANCE..."

"BECAUSE OF THE VERY EXISTENCE OF THE TEN, THE *NINE* WERE CREATED. THESE WERE THREE TIMES THREE MORTAL MEN COMPLETELY DEVOID OF COMPASSION, LOVE OR CHARITY..."

"WHOSE ONLY PURPOSE WAS THE UNDOING OF THE TEN AND THE PROLIFERATION OF EVIL FOR ITS OWN SAKE!"

"THE *NINE* WERE EXTREMELY SUCCESSFUL. AFTER ALL, THEY COULD OFFER RICHES, POWER, PLEASURES OF THE FLESH AND ARCANE SATISFACTIONS TOO OBSCURE TO MENTION!"

"ONE OF THE TEN REALIZED THAT THE *NINE* COULD ONLY BE HELD IN CHECK BY DRASTIC MEANS. THIS OF COURSE MEANT RENOUNCING HIS STATUS AS ONE OF THE TEN AND FORMING A RENEGADE CULT..."

"THIS RENEGADE PACK WAS HUNTED BY THE *NINE* AND WERE FORCED INTO HIDING IN THE HILLS, LIVING LIKE WILD WOLVES AND HONING THEIR SKILLS..."

WAIT A MINUTE! HOLD ON! THIS IS *NUTS!*

I DON'T WANT TO BUST UP A LONELY OLD MAN'S FANTASY, BUT YOU GOT ALL THESE OTHER KIDS BELIEVING IN SOME WEIRD STUFF HERE! GET REAL!

NEXT YOU'LL BE TELLING ME THAT THIS *NINE* OUTFIT IS OPERATING HERE IN THE SOUTH BRONX!

WHAT KIND OF--

AWOOO..AWOOO..AWOOO..
CLANG CLANG!

SIRENS! FIRETRUCKS!

SOUNDS LIKE THEY'RE BRINGING IN A COUPLE OF COMPANIES!

THEY'RE ALL STOPPING WITHIN BLOCKS OF HERE!

IT'S JUST AROUND THE CORNER! THAT'S WHERE--

--THE WELTSCHMERZ HARDWARE STORE IS!

AMBULANCE

LET'S HEAR IT, SAM...

NOT MUCH TO TELL, INSPECTOR CASSIDY. I HAD SUSPICIONS ABOUT LAMARR, SO I FOLLOWED HIM. I FIGURED HE'D TRY SOMETHING LIKE THIS--

POLIC

DO NOT CROSS

I DIDN'T DO NOTHING! I WAS JUST WALKING ON MY WAY TO ROB SOME VIDEO GAMES WHEN THE STORE BURST INTO FLAMES ALL BY ITSELF!

THEN THAT MANIAC JUMPED ME AND TRIED TO KILL ME! LOCK THAT SUCKER UP! I GOT RIGHTS, YOU KNOW!

DID YOU ACTUALLY SEE HIM TORCH YOUR FATHER'S STORE?

NO. I WAS TOO LATE FOR THAT. JELLY AND ZULU PROBABLY LIT OUT WITH THE GAS CANS AND--

SAM, I'VE GOT NO CHOICE. I'VE GOT TO TAKE YOU IN FOR ASSAULT--

STOP

POLICE

DO NOT CROSS

DO NOT CROSS

MAYBE THAT CHARGE SHOULD BE ATTEMPTED MURDER!

EMERGENCY

AMBULANCE

IT IS MY CIVIC DUTY TO ENSURE OUR STREETS ARE FREE OF MURDEROUS RACISTS!

POLIC

A GRAVE INJUSTICE HAS BEEN DONE HERE! I SHALL NOT STAND BY AND SEE THIS UNDERPRIVILEGED YOUTH BROUGHT LOW BY THE SONS OF AN EXPLOITIVE OPPRESSOR CLASS AND SNUBBED BY A CALLOUS BUREAUCRACY!

HELLO, LAMARR. I'M MELVIN CRENSHAW, ATTORNEY.

I AIN'T GOT NO MONEY FOR A LAWYER...

YOU DON'T PAY A CENT UNTIL WE WIN.

WIN WHAT?

THE LAWSUIT FOR DAMAGES. WE ARE GOING TO SUE SLIPPERY SAM WELTSCHMERZ FOR EVERYTHING HIS FATHER HAS!

ALL RIGHT!

SO, RAFAEL...YOU STILL THINK THAT THE EVIL IN THIS WORLD IS RANDOM? OH YES, A LOT OF IT IS. AND THERE ARE TRULY GOOD PEOPLE WHO PROFESS NO FAITH.

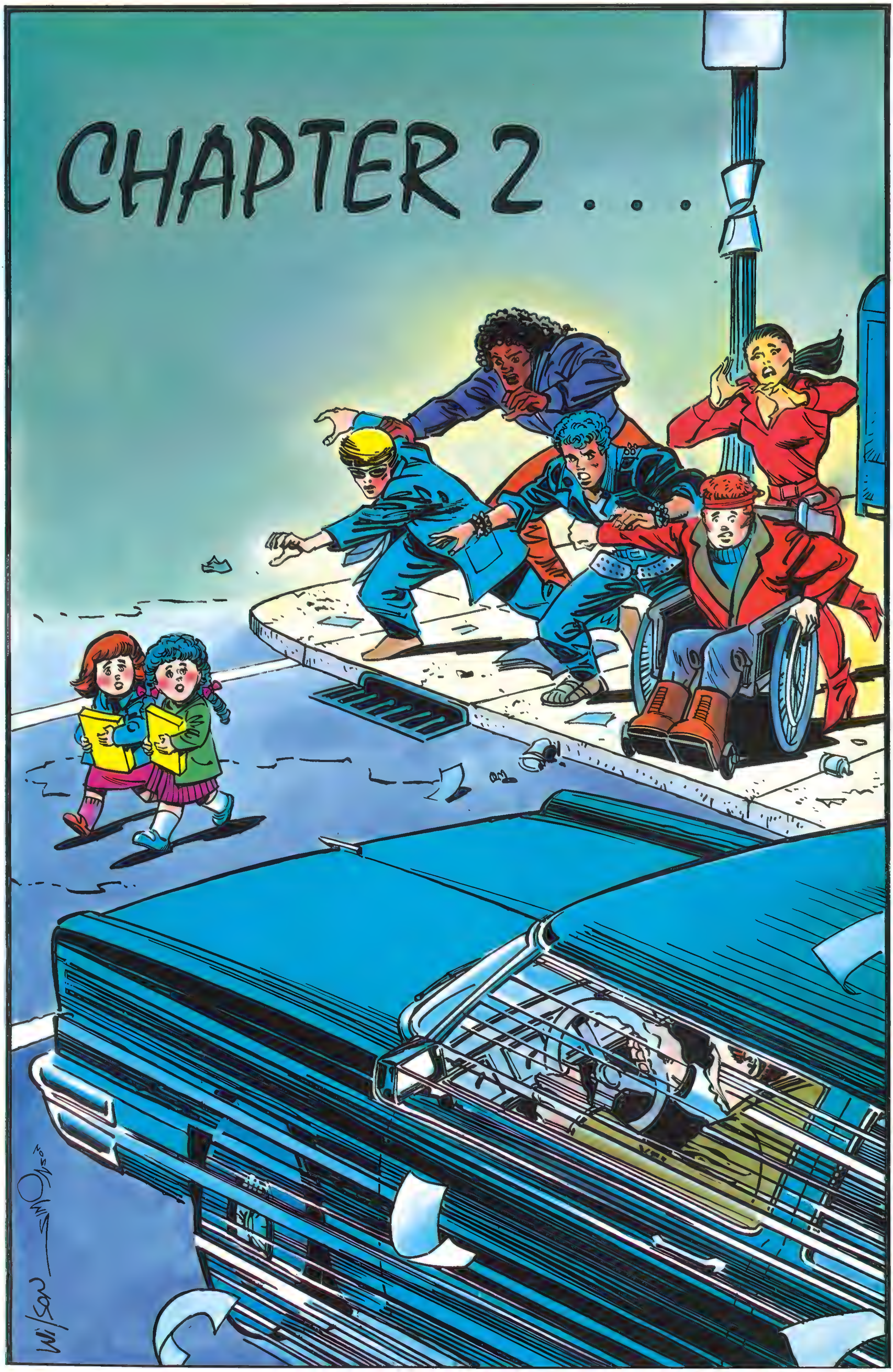
BUT LOOK THERE ON THE FINGER OF THE LAWYER!

"SEE THE SIGIL ON THAT SIGNET RING?"

THE THREE CLAWED TRISKELION...

...THE SIGN OF *THE NINE!*

CHAPTER 2 . . . .



THE CRUCIBLE

THE HOLDING CELL OF A POLICE PRECINCT IN THE SOUTH BRONX...

WELL, WELL, WELL... IF IT AIN'T "SLIPPERY SAM WELTSCHMERZ!

WE HEAR YOU PUT A BEATING ON OUR HOME-BOY LAMARR!

AIN'T IT BAD ENOUGH THAT YOUR KIND COMES INTO THE GHETTO TO EXPLOIT THIRD WORLD BROTHERS AND SISTERS?

"MY KIND" DIDN'T COME *INTO* THE GHETTOS...

...WE WERE ***BORN*** IN THEM. AND WE DIED IN THEM. A THOUSAND YEARS WORTH...

WHAT ABOUT THE EXPLOITATION?

I THINK YOU'VE BEEN EXPLOITED BY THE PEOPLE WHO TAUGHT YOU HOW TO SAY THAT WORD WITHOUT TELLING YOU WHAT IT MEANT.

YOU CALLING US STUPID?

GET HIM!

WHA? HE'S GONE!

BUT NOT FORGOTTEN. YOU GOTTA BE FASTER THAN THAT TO CATCH SLIPPERY SAM.

YOU'RE SURE GOOD AT SNEAKIN' AROUND, AIN'T YOU?

YEAH. LIKE YOU'RE GOOD AT BEING UGLY AND STUPID.

ARRRRGH!

ARRRGH? ANYBODY THAT INARTICULATE DOESN'T NEED HIS FRONT TEETH!

WHAPP!

THAT WASN'T SMART, SLIPPERY!

A BAD RAIN GONNA FALL ON YOU...

...ALL FISTS AND HEELS!

MEANWHILE, AT THE FRONT DESK...

SERGEANT! MY CLIENT, MR. LAMARR BATTLE, HAS BEEN VICIOUSLY AND WRONGFULLY ASSAULTED, ACCUSED OF A CRIME HE DIDN'T COMMIT AND ILLEGALLY DETAINED!

MR. CRENSHAW, SAMUEL WELTSCHMERZ CLAIMS TO HAVE WITNESSED YOUR CLIENT SET THE FIRE THAT DESTROYED THE SENIOR MR. WELTSCHMERZ' HARDWARE STORE...

DONATE BLOOD

SAM WELTSCHMERZ BORE A GRUDGE AGAINST MY CLIENT...

...TWO NOTARIZED AFFIDAVITS TO THAT EFFECT AND A WRIT OF HABEAS CORPUS TO BOOT!

HMMMM...

AWWRIGHT! BREAK IT UP!

HEY! IT AIN'T OUR FAULT!

IT WAS THAT SLIPPERY SAM! HE DID IT! HE WAS...

...VIOLATING OUR CIVIL RIGHTS!

O.K., WHERE IS HE? WE GOT A NICE ISOLATION TANK JUST DOWN THE HALL...

HUH? HE WAS JUST HERE!

WELL, HE AIN'T HERE NOW!

OUTSIDE THE PRECINCT...

MR. BATTLE--

CALL ME LAMARR...

WHY WOULD SAM WELTSCHMERZ SO VEHEMENTLY ACCUSE YOU OF ARSON, IF HE WERE NOT SURE OF YOUR GUILT?

YOU THINK I DID IT, TOO, HUH? YOU'RE JUST AS RACIST AS SLIPPERY SAM!

NEWS

WMJR Radio

BUT I AIN'T HOLDING IT AGAINST YOU OR SAM! YOUR CASUAL RACISM IS A SYMPTOM OF YOUR ENVIRONMENT. YOU HAVE BEEN CONDITIONED TO HATE AND FEAR...

I AM STRIVING TO BE ABOVE ALL THAT...

I SINCERELY HOPE THAT SAM WELTSCHMERZ CAN BE RETURNED TO SOCIETY AS A PRODUCTIVE INDIVIDUAL...

...AFTER THE PROPER AMOUNT OF CORRECTIONAL TRAINING IN AN APPROPRIATE INSTITUTION, OF COURSE!

KJTB

WBLT

NBC

LAMARR! DOES THAT MEAN--

NO MORE QUESTIONS, PLEASE! HE'S HAD A HARD DAY...

NBC TV

DID YOU HEAR THAT?

NBC

I WISH I HADN'T...

HEY! I JUST SAW SLIPPERY IN THAT CROWD OF REPORTERS--

IMPOSSIBLE, WHEELS. HE'S LOCKED UP TIGHT...

YEAH, AND SLEAZE-BALL LAMARR WALKS FREE!

HE DIDN'T WALK. HE RODE FREE IN A LIMO!

THAT LAWYER HAD THE LOOK OF THE "*NINE*" ALL OVER HIM--

IT'S THE PRETTIEST FIRST COMMUNION DRESS EVER, INEZ!

MY COUSINS HAVE BEEN WORKING ON IT DURING THEIR LUNCH BREAKS AT ROSA'S...

THE "*NINE*!" THEY DON'T SEEM AS BELIEVABLE IN BROAD DAYLIGHT AS THEY DID LAST NIGHT...

THEY'RE REAL, ALL RIGHT. AND EVIL TO THE BONE.

DO YOU THINK MINE WILL BE AS PRETTY, INEZ?

MAYBE EVEN PRETTIER, ELENA.

ROSA'S DRESS SHOP

REALLY?

IT WAS EASIER TO BELIEVE IN A CENTURIES-OLD EVIL CULT LIKE THE "*NINE*" WHEN THE MOON WAS SHINING AND--

SCREEEEE!!!

--MAN! THAT CONTINENTAL MUST BE CLOCKIN' NINETY!

PLONK!

THIS NEIGHBORHOOD IS DISGUSTING! HOW CAN PEOPLE STAND TO DRIVE THROUGH IT SOBER?

WAIT FOR THE LIGHT, ELENA.

...CLOSE DOWN THEIR WELFARE OFFICES AND SHIP 'EM ALL BACK TO BANANAVILLE!

INEZ? WILL YOU BE MY BEST FRIEND FOREVER?

FOREVER AND EVER AND EVER, ELENA...

OH!

WHOMP!

BA-THUMP!

HUNH? WHERE'D THOSE BRATS COME FROM?!

HE... HE MOWED THEM DOWN-- AND KEPT ON GOING!

HE CAN'T MAKE GOOD TIME THROUGH THESE STREETS...

FOLLOW HIM, RAFAEL! MAYBE THE GIRLS ARE STILL--

NO WAY, SHARON...

I'M NO DOCTOR, BUT IT DON'T LOOK GOOD FOR THESE TWO...

CHECK, SHARON-- JUST IN CASE...

GONE.

THEY DIDN'T HAVE A CHANCE...

IT'S ALL ONE-WAY STREETS WITH STOP-LIGHTS AT EVERY INTERSECTION AROUND HERE...

THE CONTINENTAL WAS HEADING TOWARDS JEROME AVE. HE NEEDS TO HIT A MAJOR ARTERY TO MAKE ANY SPEED...

SOMEBODY RUNNING THROUGH THE VACANT LOTS COULD POSSIBLY CUT HIM OFF. SOMEBODY FAST...

I'M ALREADY GONE, WHEELS!

LET'S GO, SLAG. WE MAY NOT HAVE THE SPEED OF RAFAEL AND SHARON--

--BUT THEY MIGHT NEED SOME BACK-UP WHEN THEY FINALLY CATCH UP TO THIS GUY!

HEY, MAN! STAY AWAY FROM THAT!

SHE AIN'T GOT NO MORE USE FOR IT--

THAT MAY BE SO, BUT WHY DON'T YOU JUST DROP IT, ANYWAY?

AND WE'LL JUST PRETEND YOU NEVER DID ANYTHING.

...!!

WASN'T MY FAULT! THOSE BRATS WERE PROBABLY JAYWALKING!

YEAH! LOUSY FOREIGNERS! SERVES THEM RIGHT! YEAH!

CAN'T... KEEP... THIS... PACE... UP...

WHAT IF SOMEBODY REMEMBERS MY LICENSE NUMBER?

NAAAAH! THESE PEOPLE CAN'T READ!

"THEIR BRATS MUST GET RUN OVER ALL THE TIME!"

"NOBODY WILL COME FORWARD TO TESTIFY BECAUSE THEY'RE ALL ILLEGAL ALIENS AND THEY'RE AFRAID THE IMMIGRATION AUTHORITIES WILL NAIL 'EM!"

WHAT AM I WORRYING ABOUT? I'LL JUST HOSE THE BLOOD OFF WHEN I GET HOME TO SCARSDALE AND--

WHA?!!

SOME KID RUNNING AFTER ME...

HE... HE RAN AFTER ME ALL THIS WAY...

NO!

ANOTHER ONE!

HOW'D SHE GET IN FRONT OF ME?!!

WHERE ARE THEY COMING FROM!?

ARRRRRRGH!

KRUMP!

SCREEEEEE!

INSPECTOR CASSIDY!

THIS THE HIT-AND-RUN DRIVER?

YEAH. WE HAVE FOUR WITNESSES AND--

HE'LL STILL GET OFF. HE CAN AFFORD TO BUY HIMSELF AN EXPENSIVE LAWYER LIKE THE ONE YOUR PAL, LAMARR, HAS...

HE SHOULD'VE RUN HER DOWN. HE ALREADY HAD TWO COUNTS AGAINST HIM, WHAT COULD A THIRD HURT?

I LIKE THE WAY YOUR MIND WORKS, LAMARR.

IT'S SO UNCLUTTERED BY FRIVOLITIES... LIKE CONSCIENCE AND ETHICS...

YOU CUTTIN' ON ME? YOU BEST WATCH IT. I AIN'T STUPID --

AU CONTRAIRE! YOU HAVE ALL THE QUALITIES THAT WE OF "*THE NINE*" ADMIRE AND RESPECT!

THIS OUTFIT, "*THE NINE*," THEY THE DUDES PAYING FOR ALL THIS? LAWYER STUFF, LIMOS, AND ALL?

THAT'S RIGHT, LAMARR. THEY'RE PICKING UP THE WHOLE TAB, SO TO SPEAK.

WHAT'S IN IT FOR THEM? NOBODY DOES SOMETHING FOR NOTHING... LEAST OF ALL, RICH, WHITE PEOPLE!

WE WANT TO INVEST IN YOU, LAMARR... AND I ASSURE YOU, WE ARE A MULTI-NATIONAL AND MULTI-RACIAL ORGANIZATION...

IN FACT, WE WERE FOUNDED BEFORE ANGLO-SAXONS EVEN EXISTED!

I DON'T TRUST NO RICH, BLACK PEOPLE EITHER --

HEY! WE STOPPIN' HERE? I KNOW THIS BUILDING! THIS THE ONE WITH MONSTERS ALL OVER IT!

GARGOYLES, LAMARR. THEY'RE CALLED GARGOYLES.

YEAH? THIS PLACE IS THE KRUSH!

I'M GLAD YOU LIKE IT.

YOU GOT THE WHOLE BUILDING?

YES, BUT OUR MAIN OFFICE IS ON THE TOP FLOOR...

...YOU SEE, WE'RE INTERESTED IN GROOMING YOU FOR REALLY BIG THINGS.

LIKE WHAT?

ONE STEP AT A TIME, LAMARR.

FOR THE TIME BEING, IF YOU WANT THE SOUTH BRONX, YOU CAN HAVE IT...

...ALL YOU HAVE TO DO IS ONE TINY, ITTY BITTY FAVOR FOR "*THE NINE!*"

I DON'T HAVE TO KILL NOBODY, DO I?

NO, OF COURSE NOT...

...ALL YOU HAVE TO DO IS KNOCK ON A DOOR AND OUR PROFESSIONALS WILL TAKE CARE OF THE REST!

DAG! THIS IS *SOME* CLUBHOUSE!

OH, I MAY HAVE FORGOTTEN TO TELL YOU THAT THERE IS ONE TEENSY LITTLE CATCH TO ALL THIS LARGESSE YOU ARE ABOUT TO RECEIVE...

HUH?

THE *NINE* DOES LIKE TO PUT ITS MARK ON EVERYTHING IT OWNS!

MEANWHILE...

...AND HOW IS MR. WELTSCHMERZ TODAY, NURSE?

PRETTY STABLE, DOCTOR--

--WHO ARE YOU? I THOUGHT DR. RICH WAS ASSIGNED TO...

I'M A... SPECIALIST. DR. RICH ASKED ME TO LOOK IN...

YOU KNOW THE CASE? HE WAS BEATEN BY THUGS IN HIS HARD-WARE STORE--

I'M FAMILIAR WITH THE DE TAILS. YOU MAY LEAVE, NURSE.

HI, POP. I JUST WANTED TO LET YOU KNOW THAT I'M GOING TO TAKE CARE OF EVERYTHING...

YOU JUST GET BETTER AND LET SAMMY FIX THINGS!

SAMMY! THEY SAID YOU WERE IN JAIL--

JAIL IS JUST A STATE OF MIND, POP, LIKE BEING IN THE HOSPITAL--

HEY! DR. RICH DIDN'T SEND A SPECIALIST TO--

WHERE IS HE?

WHO?

BACK IN THE SOUTH BRONX, IN MR. MACK'S BASEMENT APARTMENT...

WHAT CAN WE DO, MR. MACK? WE CAN'T LET SLIPPERY SAM ROT IN JAIL! HOW CAN WE RAISE THE BAIL?

NO. SLIPPERY SAM WELTSCHMERZ IS MUCH SAFER WHERE HE IS. BESIDES, NO JAIL CAN HOLD HIM UNLESS HE WANTS TO BE HELD...

WE CAN'T. WE'LL HAVE TO BREAK HIM OUT...

HMMM. I CAN WORK ON PUTTING TOGETHER A WORKABLE PLAN AND--

WHEN SAM WAS TEN, HE WAS THE KING OF HIDE-AND-SEEK. THAT'S WHEN I DECIDED TO COACH HIM. HE'S BEEN MY STUDENT FOR FAR LONGER THAN THE REST OF YOU...

"...BUT HIS IS NOT THE SKILL OF THE FIGHTER, LIKE RAFAEL. NOR IS HIS THE DISCIPLINE OF THE PLANNER, LIKE WHEELS. HE HASN'T THE SPEED AND ENDURANCE OF SHARON AND CERTAINLY HIS STRENGTH IS NO MATCH FOR SLAG'S!

"SAM IS THE TRICKSTER, THE ESCAPER, THE LISTENER, THE SPY! THE ONE WHO WAITS IN THE QUIET AND THE DARK!

"THE ONE WHO CAN SEEM TO PASS THROUGH WALLS...

"...THE NINJA!"

WHOA! BACK UP! NOW I KNOW YOU GUYS ARE PULLING MY LEG! I KNOW ALL ABOUT NINJAS! I GO TO THE MOVIES! FIRST OF ALL, NINJAS ARE JAPANESE! YOU SAID YOU GOT YOUR MYSTERIOUS TRAINING IN CHINA! AND--

ARE YOU FINISHED?

Y-YES, SIR...

I MET A NINJA ONCE. IN JAPAN...

...IN THE PORT OF YOKOSUKA WHERE I WAS STATIONED AFTER THE WAR.

"EVERYTHING WAS STILL IN A BIG MESS BACK THEN. I WAS PASSING AN OLD PAPA-SAN, TURNIN' RICE BOWLS ON HIS FOOT-POWERED POTTERY WHEEL..."

"...WHEN WITHOUT ANY WARN-ING..."

WHAAHHHIZ!

HEY! YOU CRAZY OR SOMETHING?!!

THIS COULD'VE KILLED ME IF I HADN'T--

-- BUT YOU DID CATCH IT, I CAN SEE YOUR SKILL IN YOUR VERY WALK. PLEASE TO RETURN MY BOWL?

SURE THING, OLD MAN!

PLOP!

YOU ARE ADVANCED IN THE *ART*, BUT IF YOU WANT TO LIVE LONG ENOUGH TO BE OF USE IN THE BATTLE AGAINST THE *NINE*, THEN YOU HAD BETTER LEARN TO HIDE IT!

THEN TEACH ME, VENERABLE ONE!

NO. I AM BUT A WATCHER. YOU MUST GO TO THE MISTY MOUNTAIN TO LEARN THE SECRETS OF CONCEALMENT!

AND THEN?

THAT'S ALL.

YOU'RE NOT GOING TO TELL US WHAT HAPPENED ON MISTY MOUNTAIN?

THAT'S FOR SLIPPERY TO TELL...

LATER...

LOOK, SHARON... UHHH... I'D LIKE TO SEE YOU...

IF YOU BECOME ONE OF US, YOU'LL SEE ME ALL THE TIME, RAFAEL.

I DON'T MEAN LIKE THAT! I MEAN...

VOGUE

USA TODAY

DON'T YOU UNDERSTAND, RAFAEL? THROUGH MR. MACK AND THE PACK, I'VE GOT A START ON GETTING OUT OF THE GHETTO. I COULD GET A TRACK SCHOLARSHIP.

I'VE GOT NO TIME FOR ROMANCE. NOT AT THIS STAGE OF MY LIFE--

112

AND ESPECIALLY NOT WITH NO PUERTO RICAN PUNK WITH A PONYTAIL! YOU'D BEST FADE OUT, KID--BEFORE I TURN YOUR FACE INTO A GREASY SPOT!

WHO THE--

SHHHH! THAT'S MY FATHER! HE CAN GET MEAN AND--

CASSIDY IS SCOURING THE NEIGHBORHOOD! SLIPPERY ESCAPED AND WE GOTTA TELL MACK!

OUTSIDE MR. MACK'S BUILDING...

HERE WE ARE, LAMARR, YOU'LL FEEL BETTER AFTER YOU'VE DONE YOUR LITTLE JOB...

TH-THEY B-BRANDED ME, MR. CRENSHAW! BURNT THIS SIGN ON MY CHEST!

IT'LL HEAL UP JUST FINE!

NOW GO AHEAD AND DO WHAT I TOLD YOU TO!

YOU'RE ONE OF US, NOW!

F F F

YEAH...

I'M ONE OF THEM...

BUT...

WHAT THE HECK...

...ARE THEY?

I DON'T UNDERSTAND THIS, NO-HOW!

HE SAID ALL I HAVE TO DO IS KNOCK ON THE DOOR...

...AND THEIR PROFESSIONALS WOULD TAKE CARE OF THE REST!

BUT THERE AIN'T NOBODY DOWN HERE BUT ME!

IS THIS SOME KIND OF CRAZY INITIATION?

I COULD JUST GO BACK AND TELL HIM I KNOCKED...

BETTER BE SAFE. WHAT DO I SAY WHEN THE DOOR GETS ANSWERED?

SOMEBODY'S OUT THERE AND HE AIN'T KNOCKIN'...

KNOCK!

WHO'S THERE?

IT'S LAMARR BATTLE. I WANT TO TALK TO YOU ABOUT SLIPPERY SAM...

ARE YOU ALONE?

YOU CAN SEE THAT FOR YOURSELF!

ALL RIGHT--

WHA!!?? WHERE'D THEY COME FROM??!!

SILENT SLAYERS! ASSASSINS OF *THE NINE!*

BACK AT THE HOLDING CELL OF THE SOUTH BRONX PRECINCT...

OOF! HEY! WATCH WHERE YOU'RE--

HUH? SLIPPERY SAM! WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN?

AND WHAT ARE YOU DOING BACK?

I JUST WENT OUT FOR A SANDWICH...

...HERE, WANT ONE?

AT MR. MACK'S...

LOOK AT THIS CORRIDOR!

LOOKS LIKE "MEAN JOE" AND "REFRIGERATOR" WENT AT EACH OTHER WITH SLEDGEHAMMERS!

EMPTY!

THIS MUST HAVE BEEN SOME FIGHT!!

THAT'S FOR SURE...

...BUT WHO WON?

CHAPTER 3 . . .

TRANSFIGURATION

NIGHT, IN THE SOUTH BRONX...

I DON'T LIKE THIS. WE'RE SUPPOSED TO BE ON THE SIDE OF THE LAW...

...WHAT'RE WE DOING BREAKING INTO A POLICE STATION?

THERE'S A LAW AGAINST BREAKING OUT OF A COP-SHOP, SLAG-- NOTHING ABOUT BREAKING IN...

RAFAEL'S RIGHT. BESIDES, WE'RE NOT REALLY BREAKING IN. WE JUST WANT TO TALK TO SLIPPERY!

NO LAW AGAINST TALKING TO A PRISONER, IS THERE, WHEELS?

NOT THAT I KNOW OF, SHARON!

AND WE HAVE TO LET SLIPPERY SAM KNOW ABOUT MR. MACK'S DISAPPEARANCE...HE WAS MACK'S OLDEST STUDENT!

CLUNK!

THE WINDOWS TO THE CELLS ARE ON THE TOP FLOOR, FACING THE ALLEY!

BE CAREFUL, RAFAEL!

POLICE

PSSSSST! SLIPPERY!

DID YOU REALLY JUST SAY "PSSST!"? RAFAEL, YOU'RE HOPELESS!

THEY DON'T EVEN SAY "PSSST" ON BAD SATURDAY MORNING CARTOONS ANYMORE! YOU DIDN'T BRING A CAKE WITH A FILE IN IT, DID YOU?

SLIPPERY! THIS IS REALLY IMPORTANT! SOMETHING'S HAPPENED TO MR. MACK! YOU KNEW HIM LONGER THAN ANYBODY ELSE... MAYBE YOU CAN FIGURE OUT WHAT TO DO!

KEEP YOUR VOICE DOWN. THE SQUAD ROOM IS RIGHT BELOW US...

ON THE STREETS BELOW...

...YOU LIED TO ME, MR. CRENSHAW! YOU SAID THAT ALL I HAD TO DO WAS RING THAT MR. MACK'S DOOR BELL!

YOU DIDN'T SAY NOTHING ABOUT THOSE TWO GUYS WITH THE SWORDS THAT WERE WAITING TO JUMP INSIDE AND KILL HIM!

AND THEN I HAD TO BURY THAT OLD MAN IN THE VACANT LOT AND ME WITH MY CHEST STILL HURTIN' FROM THAT HOT BRANDING IRON--

GET TO THE POINT, LAMARR.

I FIGURE WE'RE EVEN NOW FOR ALL THAT FANCY LAWYER WORK YOU DONE FOR ME. IN FACT, I THINK YOU OWE ME A LITTLE SOMETHING...

NOW WHAT COULD THAT SOMETHING BE, LAMARR?

CLYDE? PULL UP HERE ON THE LEFT...

THIS IS THE PRECINCT HOUSE WHERE "SLIPPERY" SAM WELTSCHMERZ IS BEING HELD. YOU STILL HOLD A GRUDGE AGAINST HIM, DON'T YOU, LAMARR?

IS THAT THE LITTLE SOMETHING WE OWE YOU?

YEAH, WELL, SEEING YOU ALREADY GOT THESE TWO GUYS THAT DON'T SEEM TO MIND THAT SORT OF THING AND...

SAY NO MORE.

YOW!

MR. CRENSHAW! THEY'RE GOING TO DO IT RIGHT HERE AND NOW? WITH US SITTING OUTSIDE? WHAT IF--

WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH YOU, LAMARR? FIRST YOU WANT SOMETHING AND THEN YOU DON'T...

IT LOOKED LIKE SOMEBODY GOT THE JUMP ON MR. MACK? THAT DON'T WASH...

NOBODY COULD SNEAK UP ON MR. MACK, EXCEPT MAYBE...

WSSSSSS!

A NINJA!

...LIKE THE ONE THAT JUST SLIPPED INTO THIS CELL!

THIS ONE IS GOOD. HE UNLOCKED THE CELL DOOR WITHOUT ME HEARING IT.

HE'S LURKING IN A DARK CORNER AND I **WON'T** BE **ABLE** TO FIND HIM IN TIME, BUT THAT DON'T MATTER...

...'CAUSE HE'LL FIND ME FIRST!

URK!

SLIPPERY! WHAT'S GOING ON IN THERE--

--OH, GREAT, JUST WHAT I NEED...

I DON'T SUPPOSE YOU'D CONSIDER GIVING ME A BREAK SIMPLY BECAUSE I'M NEW TO ALL THIS, WOULD YOU?

...I DIDN'T THINK SO.

WHERE DID THAT GUY COME FROM?!

HE SEEMED TO APPEAR OUT OF NOWHERE!

WHO CARES HOW HE GOT THERE! I'VE GOT TO GET OVER THERE AND SAVE RAFAEL--

OH, NO, YOU DON'T!

...IF ANYBODY'S DOING ANY SAVING AROUND HERE, IT'S GONNA BE SLAG!

EXCUSE ME, SHARON! I'VE GOT TO BRACE THIS ROPE!

SLAG'S ALMOST TWICE AS HEAVY AS RAFAEL!

IN THE SQUAD ROOM...

WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT THIS WELTSCHMERZ CASE, CASSIDY?

YOU THINK THIS KID, LAMARR, IS REALLY AS CLEAN AS HIS LAWYER, CRENSHAW, SAYS HE IS?

HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN A COP? OF COURSE, LAMARR IS DIRTY!

YOUTH DIVISION'S GOT A SHEET ON HIM LONG ENOUGH TO PAPER THE EMERALD SOCIETY HALL!

WHAT A ROTTEN BREAK! THAT LAMARR PROBABLY BEAT UP OLD MAN WELTSCHMERZ AND TORCHED HIS HARDWARE STORE...

...WHEN WELTSCHMERZ' SON CAUGHT LAMARR AND BEAT HIM UP, US COPS GET THE HONOR OF BUSTING YOUNG WELTSCHMERZ AND THERE AIN'T EVEN ENOUGH EVIDENCE TO HOLD LAMARR FOR JAYWALKING!

YEAH. WELL, WHO SAID LIFE WAS FAIR?

LOOK, IF YOU'RE SO ANXIOUS TO SHOVE MY FEET OFF THE LEDGE...

...I'M HAPPY TO OBLIGE YOU!

MR. MACK WAS RIGHT. THE ENEMY NEVER REALLY EXPECTS YOU TO FALL WHEN THEY PUSH YOU...

"GOING WITH THE FLOW MAKES THE OPPONENT HASTEN HIS ATTACK...

"...THEREBY OPENING HIMSELF TO A COUNTER-ATTACK!

"USE THE ATTACKER'S OWN FORWARD IMPETUS AGAINST HIMSELF!

"AND EVEN IN A SEEMINGLY UNTENABLE POSITION...

"...THE WISE WARRIOR PLANS AHEAD--

"--PROVIDING FOR HIS OWN SURVIVAL!"

WELL, LAMARR... IT LOOKS LIKE YOUNG SLIPPERY SAM WELTSCHMERZ HAS FRIENDS IN HIGH PLACES!

LOFTY POSITIONS CAN LEAD TO HAVING STARS IN THE EYES...

...OR PUNCTURING VITAL ORGANS!

79 PRECINCT

WHHSSSSSST!!

SPANGG! FWEEEE!

SNIKKKTTT!

AIN'T THE WELTSCHMERZ KID CONNECTED? DON'T HE RUN WITH A GANG? THEY JUST GONNA LET HIM TAKE A BUM RAP?

THEY'RE JUST LOCAL KIDS. YOU EXPECT THEM TO BREAK HIM OUT?

ONE OF 'EM'S A CRIPPLE, THE BIGGEST GUY IS A BOOKWORM AND--

WHOMP!

HUH--

WHAT WAS THAT?

SOMETHING OUTSIDE THE WINDOW...

NOTHING OUT THERE!

WE'RE ON THE SECOND FLOOR. YOU WERE EXPECTING MAYBE SPIDER-MAN?

WHAT AN OBSTINATE CLOD! CLYDE, WILL YOU KINDLY SETTLE HIS HASH FOR HIM...

...QUIETLY!

...YESSIR, MR. CRENSHAW...

I GOT JUST THE THING. A 9mm SOFT-NOSED, SUB-SONIC SLUG FIRED THROUGH A GAS-TRAP SOUND SUP-PRESSOR...

...MAXIMUM SOFT TISSUE TRAUMA WITH MINIMAL NOISE.

CUT THE LECTURE AND SHOOT HIM, CLYDE!

CLONK!

THAT BRICK JUST DIDN'T DECIDE TO FALL ALL BY ITSELF--

--THERE MUST BE MORE OF THEM UP ON THAT ROOF!

TIME TO VACATE THE ROOF!

I'LL TAKE THE FIRE ESCAPE, CAN YOU MANAGE THE STAIRS ALONE?

SURE!

THIS GUY IS BAD NEWS ON WHEELS!

NOT ONLY CAN HE SHRUG OFF A THREE STORY FALL...

...HE CAN DO THE SHEER WALL CLIMBING BIT LIKE COUNT DRACULA!

I DON'T THINK I WANNA FIGHT THIS GUY ANY-MORE!

INSOLENT WHELP!

NINJAS OF THE NINE ARE TRAINED TO IGNORE PAIN AND INJURY--

YOU DON'T SAY?

THAT TRAINING'S GOING TO COME IN HANDY RIGHT QUICK!

...BUT IF YOU GOT YOUR HEART SET ON PUMMELING HIM MERCI-LESSLY ABOUT THE HEAD AND SHOULDERS--

--BE MY GUEST!

AWW, SLAG... I WAS JUST LURING HIM UP TO THE ROOF SO'S I COULD GO UP-SIDE HIS HEAD IN PRIVATE...

IF THEY HURT RAFAEL--

THUMP THUMP THUMP THUMP THUMP

GOOD THING I OPTED FOR THE HEAVY DUTY SUS-PENSION!

HELP ME GET CLYDE INTO THE FRONT SEAT...

HE'S HURT BAD, MR. CRENSHAW!

NOW IT SOUNDS LIKE SOMEONE'S HITTING A PUNCH-ING BAG ON THE ROOF!

LET'S CHECK IT OUT...

AWWWWWW! HE FALL DOWN, GO *BOOM!*

"READY WITH EVERY NOD TO TUMBLE DOWN INTO THE FATAL BOWELS OF THE DEEP."

SAY WHAT?

RICHARD THE THIRD, ACT III, SCENE 4.

YEAH. WHATEVER. THAT GUY MUST REALLY BE A NINJA...

...AFTER ALL THAT, HE'S STILL MANAGING TO CRAWL AWAY!

WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR, LAMARR? START THE CAR AND DRIVE US AWAY FROM THIS MESS!

I CAN'T DRIVE, MR. CRENSHAW...

...AND SOME OF SLIPPERY'S FRIENDS JUST SHOWED UP!

THIS IS THE ONLY WAY DOWN FROM THE ROOF! IF SOMEBODY'S UP THERE, WE GOT THEM TRAPPED!

THE COPS WILL BE UP HERE ANY SECOND! IS THERE ANY ROPE LEFT?

NOT ENOUGH!

AND THERE AREN'T ANY FIRE ESCAPES! DON'T THEY HAVE TO OBEY THE FIRE LAWS?

OF COURSE NOT! THEY'RE COPS!

PHFFFT!

GET IN THE CAR, LAMARR! IT'S JUST THAT CRIPPLE AND THE GIRL!

THEY MAY BE FAST, BUT THEY'RE NOT BULLET-PROOF!

POLICE

THAT CREEP'S SHOOTING AT WHEELS AND SHARON!!

RAFAEL!!

OH, WELL, IT'S FASTER THAN THE STAIRS...

...AND LESS CROWDED WITH COPS!

FF

THE GIRL'S CLOSER! SHOOT HER FIRST!

O.K.

HEY MAN! YOU SHOULDN'T LEAVE A FANCY STRETCH LIMO PARKED IN THIS NEIGHBORHOOD!

WHOOMP!

PRONGGG!

9991

IT'S LIKELY TO GET ALL DENTED UP!

THWOMP!

RAFAEL!

KA-THOOM!

NOTHING UP HERE. YOU BEEN HEARING THINGS, CASSIDY?

SOMETHING AIN'T KOSHER IN THE STATE OF DENMARK, MAHONEY!

LET'S CHECK OUT THE HOLDING CELLS ON THE THIRD FLOOR!

THAT SOUNDED LIKE SOMETHING BIG AND HEAVY HIT THE ROOF OF THE BUS!

THOSE HOODLUM KIDS ARE ALWAYS THROWING STUFF OUT THE WINDOWS!

ANIMALS! THEY OUGHTTA BE LOCKED UP!

LOCKED UP? THEY SHOULD BE SHOT!

THAT'S RIGHT, OLD LADY...

THEY SHOULD BE SHOT! ESPECIALLY THAT RAFAEL!

NOBODY MISSING IN THE HOLDING CELLS, CASSIDY!

WE GOT THE RIGHT NUMBER OF BODIES IN THE BUNKS!

THERE'S ONE BODY IN PARTICULAR, I'M INTERESTED IN...

...SLIPPERY SAM WELTSCHMERZ!

AND THIS AIN'T HIM!

HE'S NOT ONE OF OUR PRISONERS! AND WHAT'S THIS WEIRD OUTFIT HE'S WEARING?

IT DOESN'T MAKE SENSE. THIS GUY BROKE INTO THE POLICE STATION, PICKED THE LOCK OF THE HOLDING CELL AND MANAGED TO GET KNOCKED OUT AND TIED UP!

"DID SLIPPERY SAM DO THIS?

"...AND WHERE IS HE?"

"A PUBLIC LINE"

THE TWO ON THE ROOF GOT AWAY... MY BROTHER NEVER CAME BACK FROM THE HOLDING CELL...

CAN YOU DRIVE?

I BROKE A LEG IN THE FALL, BUT I CAN MANAGE...

THAT KID, LAMARR... HE PICKED UP CLYDE'S GUN!

KEEP DRIVING! I'LL DEAL WITH HIM LATER!

LATER...

BETTER SPLIT UP HERE. GOODNIGHT! MAKE IT HOME SAFE!

RAFAEL! DO YOU KNOW WHAT TIME IT IS?

YOU DON'T HAVE TO WAIT UP FOR ME, MOM! I'M NOT A LITTLE KID ANY MORE...

IF YOU'RE NOT A LITTLE BOY YOU SHOULD BE TAKING A MAN'S RESPONSIBILITIES INSTEAD OF CHASING AROUND THE STREETS WITH THAT GANG--

THEY'RE NOT A GANG!

NO, I GUESS THEY'RE NOT REALLY A GANG. JUST WHAT DOES MR. MACK CALL HIS LITTLE TROOP OF STREET PUNKS?

MR. MACK? YOU KNOW ABOUT MR. MACK?

I KNOW WHAT I HAVE TO KNOW...

HE'S A CRAZY OLD MAN. EL ESTÁ BIEN LOCO.

HE FILLS YOUR HEAD WITH NONSENSE ABOUT EVIL PLOTS FROM ANCIENT TIMES! WE DON'T NEED CONSPIRACIES TO EXPLAIN WHY LIFE IS HARD, RAFAEL!

I WORK TWO SHIFTS IN A SWEATSHOP TO KEEP THIS FAMILY TOGETHER AND YOU GO OUT AT NIGHT TO SAVE THE WORLD!

IT'S NOT LIKE THAT, MOM...

NO? ARE YOU TELLING ME I'M WRONG?

WHERE DO YOU GO AT NIGHT, RAFAEL? WHAT KIND OF SECRETS DO YOU HAVE THAT YOU CAN'T TELL YOUR MOTHER?

THINGS ARE GOING TO CHANGE, MOM...

...I'LL FACE UP TO MY RESPONSIBILITIES.

HOURS LATER...

PSSSST!

JUST JOKING!

MEETING ON YOUR ROOF IN TEN MINUTES!

SLIPPERY! WAIT UP, I HAVE TO TALK TO--

GONE!

LOOK, I DON'T KNOW HOW TO SAY THIS...

WHAT? THAT YOU WANT OUT? THAT YOUR MOTHER DOESN'T WANT YOU TO PLAY WITH US ANYMORE?

WE'RE NOT GOING TO LET YOU QUIT THAT EASY, RAFAEL. YOU OWE US...AND YOU OWE MR. MACK...

BUT MY MOTHER--

YOUR MOTHER OWES MR. MACK, TOO...

MR. MACK PAID FOR YOUR FATHER'S FUNERAL, I KNOW. I DELIVERED THE CHECK FOR HIM.

MR. MACK GOT YOUR MOTHER HER JOB AND MADE SURE SHE DIDN'T GO ON WELFARE NO MATTER HOW BAD THINGS GOT.

MR. MACK TRACKED DOWN THE TWO PUNKS THAT KILLED YOUR FATHER. HE SETTLED YOUR MOTHER'S DEBTS. ALL OF THEM.

MR. MACK NEVER WENT BEHIND YOUR MOTHER'S BACK. HE ASKED HER IF HE COULD TRAIN YOU AND SHE AGREED.

A MOTHER'S LOVE GOES BEYOND HONOR, RAFAEL. SHE WANTED OUT ON HER BARGAIN AND YOU CAN'T BLAME HER FOR THAT. SHE WOULD DO ANY-THING TO PROTECT YOU...

WE'RE NOT ASKING YOU TO BETRAY HER TRUST. WE'RE JUST ASKING YOU TO CONFIRM YOUR TRUST...

...IN US.

THE CEREMONY FOR THE FORMATION OF A NEW PACK IS OVER TWO THOUSAND YEARS OLD. MR. MACK TOLD ME ABOUT IT SO MANY TIMES, I KNOW IT BY HEART.

THERE ARE NO WORDS OR PLEDGES. WORDS CAN BE TWISTED AND PLEDGES SPOKEN WITH A FALSE HEART.

THIS DAGGER WAS FORGED FROM THE BROKEN SWORD OF ONE OF THE TEN JUST MEN...

WITH IT, WE CUT OUR THUMBS SO THAT OUR BLOOD MAY MINGLE WHEN WE JOIN HANDS IN THE CIRCLE...

...A CIRCLE OF BLOOD AND STEEL.

MR. MACK MENTIONED THAT THE CEREMONY WASN'T COMPLETE WITHOUT FIRE. DID SOMEBODY BRING FIRE?

WHENEVER THERE IS THE NEED FOR THE EXISTENCE OF THE PACK, *SOMEBODY ELSE* CAN ALWAYS BE COUNTED ON TO BRING THE FIRE!

I'LL SHOW THAT UPPITY 'RICAN!

THAT RAFAEL IS MESSING WITH THE WRONG DUDE!

HERE I WAS GETTING ALL MAD AT SLIPPERY AND HE WAS JUST STICKING UP FOR RAFAEL!

IT'S ALL RAFAEL'S FAULT THAT I GOT MIXED UP WITH THOSE WEIRDOS FROM *THE NINE!* IT'S HIS FAULT THAT I GOT BRANDED ON THE CHEST WITH A HOT IRON!

SPLOOSH

SPLOOSH

SPLOOSH

SPLOOSH

I'LL SHOW HIM! I'LL SHOW HIS WHOLE STINKIN' FAMILY! AND ALL HIS NEIGHBORS, TOO!

THIS WHOLE BUILDING IS GONNA GO UP LIKE A ROMAN CANDLE! RAFAEL GONNA BE ONE CRISPY CRITTER! AND I'LL BE--

WHU?

WHO'S THAT?

YOU DON'T REMEMBER ME, LAMARR?

I'M THE GUY YOU BURIED IN THAT VACANT LOT!

MR. MACK!

WRAPPED ME UP IN AN OLD SHEET AND BURIED ME UNDER A GARBAGE PILE SO THE RATS COULD EAT ME...

THAT WASN'T VERY NICE, LAMARR...

YOU AIN'T DEAD! THERE AIN'T NO SUCH THING AS GHOSTS!

YOU WAS JUST PLAYING DEAD ALL ALONG! I HEARD ABOUT NINJAS! THEY CAN HOLD THEIR BREATH AND STOP THEIR HEARTS...

I GUESS THOSE TWO NINJAS FROM *THE NINE* DIDN'T KILL YOU GOOD ENOUGH!

THEY WAS STUPID TO USE SWORDS, ANYWAY...

DON'T DO IT, LAMARR--

FOR A GHOST, YOU'RE AWFULLY AFRAID OF A GUN, MACK!

BLAMM!

I WASN'T CONCERNED FOR MYSELF...

I WAS CONCERNED ABOUT THE SPARKS FROM THE MUZZLE FLASH!

WHA?

THE GASOLINE!

IT SPLASHED ALL OVER ME WHILE I WAS--

SAVE ME, MR. MACK!

SAVE MEEEEEEEEE!

FWOOOOSH!

ARRRRRRRRGH!

PULL OVER! QUICK!

SOMETHING'S BURNING IN THE ALLEY!

THE CEREMONY IS COMPLETE...

MR. MACK SAID THAT *NINE* CHASED THE FIRST PACKS INTO THE HILLS WHERE THEY LIVED LIKE HUNTED WOLVES...

THE HILLS OF THE SOUTH BRONX ARE COVERED WITH TENEMENTS, RUBBLE STREWN LOTS...

BUT THE AGE-OLD CONFLICT IS THE SAME...

THAT MAKES US THE *WOLFPACK*, HUH?

THAT IT DOES.

"...AND I HAVE SET MY LIFE UPON A CAST, AND I WILL STAND THE HAZARD OF THE DIE."
RICHARD III ACT V, SCENE IV

WOLFPACK'S

ADVENTURES CONTINUE IN THEIR OWN SERIES

ON SALE SOON!